



# Family Handbook

2026-2027

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## **Section 1: Welcome to Cornerstone**

### **Welcome Letter**

Welcome to Cornerstone Chartered Public School!

We are so glad you are here. Cornerstone was created with a clear purpose: to make sure every child learns to read with confidence. Across New Hampshire and the country, too many students are struggling with literacy, and it affects how they feel about themselves, how they learn in other subjects, and the opportunities they have as they grow. We believe every child deserves better.

We also understand that students don't all thrive in the same kind of learning environment. Families deserve meaningful options, and Cornerstone is one of them. As a public charter school, we are tuition-free for all New Hampshire students and committed to providing a supportive, student-focused setting where every child can grow.

### **Purpose of this Handbook**

This handbook is your guide to understanding Cornerstone's policies, procedures, and expectations. It outlines student rights and responsibilities, as well as academic and behavioral expectations. It explains how families and educators work together to ensure every child thrives.

Welcome to the Cornerstone community! Together, we are creating a place where *all* children rise with the power of literacy!

## **Section 2: Vision, Mission and Values**

### **Mission**

Cornerstone's mission is to empower children in the Upper Valley to become strong readers, thinkers, and leaders through an equitable, tuition-free, literacy-first public education.

## **Vision**

We envision a future where all children rise with the power of literacy.

## **Values**

- **Equity** – Every child deserves the instruction and support to thrive.
- **Innovation** – We use proven, evidence-based methods while embracing new ideas.
- **Collaboration** – Students succeed when educators, families, and communities work together.
- **Growth** – We believe in continuous learning for students, teachers, and our entire school community.

## **Section 3: The Cornerstone Difference**

At Cornerstone, literacy is our foundation. We use instruction grounded in the Science of Reading, utilizing the Orton-Gillingham Approach to give students strong, dependable skills that set them up for success. Alongside this, our knowledge-building, hands-on curriculum helps students make connections, think critically, and stay curious about the world around them. Our program meets or exceeds New Hampshire standards, and our goal is always the same: to make sure every student is supported and challenged.

### **Literacy-First Approach**

Every teacher at Cornerstone is trained and certified in the Orton-Gillingham Approach, a structured, multisensory method grounded in the Science of Reading and proven to help *all* children, including those with learning differences, become confident readers.

The Science of Reading refers to a large body of research on how the brain learns to read. It shows that children learn best through explicit, systematic instruction in foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It also emphasizes building background knowledge so students can understand what they read.

## Content-Rich Curriculum & Project-Based Learning

Students don't just learn *how* to read; they read to *learn*. Our knowledge-building curriculum spans English language arts, math, science, social studies, and the arts, giving students the background knowledge they need to think critically and succeed across all subject areas. We pair this with collaborative project-based, experiential learning, allowing students to apply what they've learned, make real-world connections, and deepen their understanding through meaningful, hands-on work.

## Small School Environment

With small class sizes and a close-knit community, every child is known, supported, and challenged. Students receive the individual attention they need to grow at their own pace while being held to high expectations.

## Grouping Students for Growth

Children grow and develop at different rates, especially in the early years. At Cornerstone, we use Primary Learning Communities to make sure students are placed in classroom communities where expectations, routines, and instruction are well matched to their needs.

Rather than organizing classes strictly by grade, we create small, multi-age classroom communities that group children who are close in age and at similar developmental stages. These classrooms are named so students are known as members of a community rather than by a grade level.

| Approximate Age | Primary Learning Community |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Age 5 - 6       | Foundations                |
| Age 6 -8        | Pathways                   |
| Age 7 - 9       | Bridges                    |

All students belong to one classroom community for the school day. Instruction, routines, and supports are designed to meet the needs of that group, while still

ensuring students engage with grade-level learning and knowledge-building experiences.

Because children grow quickly, we review classroom groupings at planned times during the year. If a different community would better support a child's growth, adjustments may be made. These changes are based on multiple sources of information and are always focused on what will help a child learn and thrive.

Primary Learning Communities are one way that Cornerstone ensures that students receive the right support at the right time while building confidence, belonging, and strong foundations for learning.

## **Family Partnership**

We believe parents and guardians are essential partners in their child's education. Open communication, collaboration, and family engagement are central to our school culture.

## **Mission-Focused**

Our mission guides every decision we make, how we design our curriculum, how we support students, and how we build a school community where every child can thrive. Literacy is the foundation of every child's success, and it is at the heart of Cornerstone.

## **Commitment to Educators**

Cornerstone is dedicated to supporting and developing excellent teachers. Every educator receives ongoing professional development, one-on-one coaching, and training, including certification in the Orton-Gillingham Approach and evidence-based practices in writing instruction and social-emotional learning. We believe that when teachers thrive.

## **Section 4: Eligibility, Application, and Enrollment**

### **Eligibility**

#### ***NH Students***

Cornerstone Charter School is a public, tuition-free charter school open to all New Hampshire students. Admission is not based on academic performance, ability, or background. Cornerstone does not use entrance exams, interviews, or academic screening as part of the application or admission process. Every child has an equal opportunity to attend.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available seats at a grade level, admission is determined by a blind lottery conducted in accordance with New Hampshire law (RSA 194-B) and the school's Board-approved [ADM-01 Application, Admission, and Enrollment Policy](#).

The annual Open Enrollment Period, lottery date, and procedures are [published on the school's website each year](#).

#### ***Out-of-State Students***

Students who reside outside New Hampshire may apply for admission and will be considered for enrollment on a tuition basis if space permits at their grade level after all New Hampshire students have been admitted. These students may be added to the waitlist behind all New Hampshire residents. Out-of-state students are not eligible for tuition-free enrollment and are held to the same academic and behavioral expectations as New Hampshire students. Tuition rates for out-of-state students will be determined yearly by the Board of Trustees and posted on the school's website. Out-of-state students are not eligible to participate in the lottery.

### **Application Process**

Families may obtain and submit the [Cornerstone Application Form](#) through the school's website during the Open Enrollment Period, which will be determined yearly by the Board of Trustees and posted on the school's website. Printed copies

are also available upon request. Applying indicates interest in attending Cornerstone but does not guarantee a seat.

Applicants will receive confirmation once their application is received. Applications submitted after the deadline will be processed according to the rolling-admissions procedures or placed on the waitlist as outlined below.

Families whose children are offered admission will be notified in writing and must confirm acceptance by the stated deadline. Students placed on the waitlist will be notified of their position and will be contacted if a seat becomes available.

### ***Lottery Procedures***

If applications exceed available seats at a grade level, a blind lottery will be held. Each eligible applicant who resides in New Hampshire will be entered into a random drawing. The lottery will determine which students are admitted at each grade level and which are placed on a waitlist.

When a student is admitted through the lottery process, their siblings' names will be automatically drawn for their prospective grades. If there is space, siblings will be admitted as well. If not, they will be placed at the top of the grade-level waitlist as "sibling priority."

### ***Lottery Accuracy***

Cornerstone strives to ensure that the lottery is conducted fairly, accurately, and in accordance with state law and school policy. In the unlikely event of an error, such as an omission or mistake in the lottery process, the school will promptly review and correct the issue in keeping with its Board-approved procedures.

Families who have questions or concerns about the lottery or admission process may submit a written inquiry to the Executive Director. If the concern is not resolved, families may follow the [ETH-04 Grievance Procedure](#) outlined in Board policies.

## ***Admission Priorities***

Admission priorities are as follows and not subject to the lottery:

### **1. Children of Founders and Staff:**

- In accordance with Cornerstone's charter, a small percentage of available seats at each grade level shall be reserved for the children of Cornerstone founders and employees who reside in New Hampshire.

### **2. Siblings of Current Students:**

- If a student currently enrolled at Cornerstone has a sibling applying for admission, that sibling will receive priority placement if there is space available at their grade level.

For enrollment preference purposes, a sibling is defined as a student who shares at least one legal parent or legal guardian with an enrolled student. This includes biological siblings, adopted siblings, and step-siblings who meet these criteria. Proof of residency and guardianship is required.

Children placed in foster care who reside in the same household at the time of enrollment may be considered siblings for enrollment preference. Proof of residency is required.

## ***Rolling Admissions***

After the Open Enrollment Period and any required lottery, Cornerstone will continue to accept applications on a rolling basis if space remains in any grade level.

- Applications received after the Open Enrollment Period will be reviewed in the order they are received.
- If a grade is at capacity, the applicant's name will be added to the existing waitlist in order of receipt.
- Once a seat becomes available, families will be contacted promptly.

## **Enrollment and Registration**

Once a student has been offered admission, families must complete all enrollment paperwork by the specified deadline. Required documents include:

- Two proofs of residency within the last 30 days (for NH students)
  - Examples: Lease agreement, mortgage statement, property tax bill, utility bill
- Birth certificate or proof of age, must age 5 by September 30 of current school year
- An up-to-date immunization record (students must meet the immunization requirements set by the NH Department of Health and Human Services)
- A record of your child's physical exam completed within the past 12 months
- If applicable: A copy of your full Custody/Parenting Plan (for divorced or separated parents)

### ***School Records Transfer***

After a student has been officially admitted and enrollment paperwork is complete, families will need to sign a Records Release Form. Cornerstone will obtain records from the student's previous school.

A student is officially enrolled once all documentation and records are received and approved by the school.

### ***Re-Enrollment and Transfers***

#### **Returning Students**

Current students are automatically re-enrolled each year unless their family notifies the school in writing that they will not be returning.

#### **Transfers**

Students transferring to Cornerstone during the school year may be admitted if space is available. If a grade level is full, the student's name will be added to the waitlist.

*For complete procedures, including how Cornerstone addresses errors or omissions in the lottery, please refer to the Board-approved ADM-01 Application, Admission, and Enrollment Policy available on the school's website.*

## **Section 5: School Operations and Logistics**

### **School Hours & Schedule**

The school day runs from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Students may arrive as early as 7:40 AM. Because our morning routine begins promptly at 8:00 AM, students should be in the building and ready to learn by that time. Starting the day on time helps everyone settle in smoothly and ensures students don't miss important instruction.

Cornerstone will replicate the schedule of the Lebanon School District to ease transportation issues and coordinate the schedules for multischool families. Please refer to our website for the [school calendar](#).

### ***Foundations Learning Community First Day***

Foundations Learning Community students will begin school one day earlier than the rest of the students. On this day, parents and guardians may park and walk their child into the building and help them get settled. Foundations students will have the entire building to themselves, creating a calm, welcoming start to their school experience. Beginning the following day, Foundations students will join the regular drop-off routine with the rest of the school.

### **Student Transportation**

Students who live in Lebanon may ride the district school bus. Under state law, the school district in which a charter school is located provides transportation to charter school students on the same terms, routes, and schedules as it provides for its own students.

For families who live outside of Lebanon, Cornerstone will help facilitate and coordinate ride-sharing opportunities among families.

## ***Arrivals***

### Drop Off Procedure:

1. Park in one of the two large parking lots (labeled Parking Lots A and B on the map below) to the left of the school.
2. Walk your student to the side entrance where a staff member will be waiting from 7:40 - 8:00 AM.

**SAFETY FIRST! PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW CHILDREN TO WALK BY THEMSELVES IN THE PARKING LOT.** THERE WILL BE CARS ENTERING AND EXITING FREQUENTLY AT THIS TIME.

All students should be walked by an adult to the side entrance where staff will greet them and ensure they get to their classrooms safely. **Please do not pull up to the side entrance and drop your child off**, as this could cause a back-up of traffic on Mt. Support Rd. Parents are asked to say goodbye at the side entrance, as entering classrooms can interrupt morning routines and instructional time.

If you need to speak with your child's teacher, please email or call to schedule a time to meet. Teachers are not available to discuss student matters during drop-off or pick-up.

Please be mindful of parking regulations and do not park in areas marked as private property or no parking zones.

## ***Dismissals***

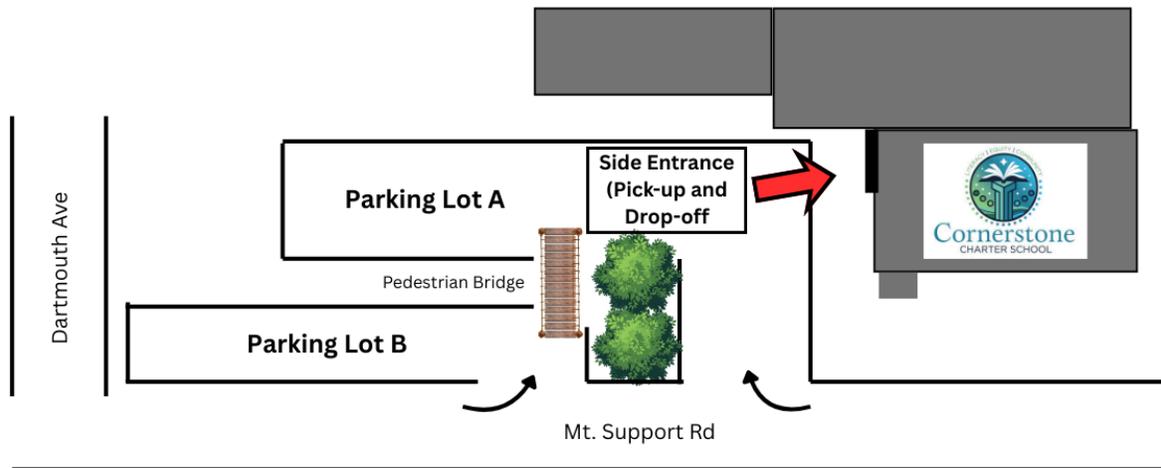
### Pick Up Procedure:

1. Park in one of the two large parking lots (labeled Parking Lots A and B on the map below) to the left of the school.
2. Walk to the side entrance where your student will be waiting.
3. Please inform the staff member that you are taking your child.

Students will be dismissed in groups, starting at 3:00 PM. Your child's group and dismissal time will be communicated to you before the first day of school. Students

will only be dismissed to individuals listed on the dismissal plan. Any alternate pick-up person must be authorized in advance and may be required to provide photo identification.

If an alternate arrangement is needed for your child's dismissal, call the office before 1:00 PM.



### ***Requests for Early Dismissal***

Please avoid scheduling appointments during the school day whenever possible. If an early dismissal is necessary:

- A parent or guardian must call or come in person to request the dismissal.
- A parent or guardian must sign out the student at the front office before leaving.

To dismiss your child to someone other than a parent/guardian, this person must be an authorized alternate pick-up person, and they may be required to provide photo identification.

## **Before and After School Care**

Cornerstone partners with the Boys & Girls Club to offer families access to safe, enriching before- and after-school programming. Enrollment in the Boys & Girls Club is optional and separate from school enrollment.

During Club hours, students are supervised by Boys & Girls Club staff, and families should communicate directly with the Club regarding attendance, schedules, fees, or concerns. This partnership helps support our families while providing students with a positive and engaging extension of their school day. Before and after school hours are 7:00-8:00 AM and 3:00-5:30 PM.

## **School Closures, Delays, and Early Release**

### ***Closures and Delays***

Cornerstone will strive to make decisions about school cancellations or delayed openings by 6:00 AM. Whenever possible, snow days will be called the night before. Information about school closings or delays will be shared through:

- WMUR-TV Channel 9 and its website
- The Cornerstone website
- Email and automated phone notifications sent to families

Because our students come from many towns across New Hampshire, we ask families to use their own judgment when deciding whether travel is safe during severe weather.

In the event of a two-hour delay, school will start at 10:00 AM.

### ***Early Release Days***

Early Release Days are scheduled on the school calendar. On these days, students will be dismissed at 12:30 PM.

## ***Emergency Early Release***

If weather conditions worsen or another emergency arises during the school day, families will be notified by email and automated phone message as soon as possible.

When an emergency early release is announced, all students must be picked up promptly at the stated dismissal time. Every effort will be made to reach all parents in a timely manner. Please ensure you pick up your student promptly because staff cannot remain in the building beyond that time due to safety concerns.

## **Emergency Procedures**

Cornerstone maintains an Emergency Operations Plan to ensure the safety of all students and staff in the event of an emergency that may require evacuation or lockdown procedures. Safety drills are conducted throughout the school year to help students and staff practice and prepare for a variety of situations.

The plan is reviewed and updated annually by school leadership and approved by the Board of Trustees. The school also collaborates regularly with local law enforcement and emergency management officials to ensure that safety procedures are current and effective.

Students and families play an important role in supporting the school's emergency planning and response procedures. To help ensure the safety of all students, families are asked to:

- Provide current emergency contact information at the start of each school year in the Alma Student Information System.
- Update contact information promptly whenever phone numbers, addresses, or authorized emergency contacts change.
- Arrange backup transportation plans with other parents or caregivers in case of transportation difficulties or early dismissal.
- Ensure that no harmful devices or objects are brought to school.

## **Visitors**

We welcome visitors to Cornerstone Charter School. For the safety of all students, visitors must report to the main office upon arrival, sign in, and wear a visitor nametag while on campus. Before leaving, visitors are asked to sign out at the office.

Parents and guardians who wish to visit a classroom during the school day should first coordinate with the classroom teacher and the Executive Director or Assistant Director. Once approved, a mutually convenient date and time will be scheduled for the visit.

## **Contacting Students at School**

To minimize classroom disruptions and maintain a focused learning environment, all communication with students during the school day must go through the school office at **603-678-4778** or **office@cornerstone-cs.org**. The office staff will deliver messages to students at an appropriate time.

In the event of an emergency, parents or guardians should clearly inform the office so the message can be delivered immediately or the student can be called to the office.

Students who need to contact their parents or guardians during the school day must request permission from a staff member to use the school phone.

## ***Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Use***

In accordance with New Hampshire law, students may not use personal cell phones or other personal electronic communication devices from the start of instructional time until the end of the academic day. Devices must be powered off and stored unless needed for an approved educational, medical, or language support purpose documented by the school. Approved exceptions include medically necessary devices, devices required as part of a student's IEP or 504 plan, and devices needed to support emergent multilingual students' language access.

## **Food at School**

Students are responsible for bringing their own nutritious lunch, at least one snack, and a full water bottle each day. Cornerstone encourages meals and snacks that support learning and energy throughout the day.

The school cannot refrigerate or heat students' lunches. Items that need to stay cold should be packed in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack. Items that need to stay warm should be packed in an insulated thermos.

### ***Allergen Awareness and Food Policy***

#### **Food Allergies and Nut Safety**

Cornerstone Charter School takes food allergies seriously and works to provide a safe learning environment for all students. Nut-free classrooms or designated areas will be established when required due to a documented student allergy. Families will be notified if their child's classroom is designated as nut-free.

To support student safety, food sharing is not permitted, and students are expected to wash hands after eating. Additional accommodations will be made as outlined in individual health plans.

#### **General Guidelines**

- **No Sharing of Food:** Students may not share or trade food, snacks, or utensils at school.
- **Classroom Lunch or Snacks:** Teachers will inform families if a classroom has specific allergen restrictions (such as nuts, dairy, or eggs). Please carefully read labels and follow all guidance shared by the teacher.
- **Notification of Allergy:** Families of students with allergies must notify the school and complete a Medical Alert Form each year.

#### ***Celebrations and Food***

While each classroom has its own traditions for celebrating student birthdays, students may choose to bring in a book, craft, or treat to share with their class on their special day. If you do not wish your child to eat food that has been brought in

by a classmate, please let their teacher know. Your child's teacher will let you know if there is an upcoming celebration that will involve food so you can send in an alternative item from home for your child if you choose. If you plan to bring in a treat for your child's birthday, please let teachers know in advance.

## **Section 6: Attendance and Health**

### **Attendance Policy**

Regular attendance is essential for student success at Cornerstone. Students are expected to attend school every day that classes are in session, in accordance with New Hampshire state law. Consistent attendance helps students stay engaged, keep up with learning, and build good habits for the future.

#### ***Excused Absences***

Examples of excused absences include, but are not limited to:

- Illness (a doctor's note is required after three consecutive days)
- Recovery from an accident
- Required court appearance
- Medical or dental appointment
- Death in the immediate family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Other reasons approved by the school administration

If a student experiences a prolonged illness, a doctor's note must include the dates of the illness and any recommendations for accommodations or early dismissal.

For absences not related to illness, parents or guardians must provide a written explanation. Family vacations taken outside of scheduled school breaks are generally considered unexcused absences.

***It is especially important that students are present on the first day of school, as state adequacy aid is determined by student attendance, and the first day includes essential orientation activities and procedures.***

Completing missed assignments is at the discretion of the classroom teacher.

### ***Reporting an Absence or Tardiness***

If your child will be absent or late, please contact the school office by phone or email ([office@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:office@cornerstone-cs.org)) before the start of the school day. Include the following information:

- Student's name
- Reason for the absence or tardiness
- Expected date of return (if known)

If the school does not receive notice from home, the office will contact the parent or guardian for safety reasons.

### ***Tardiness***

School begins at 8:00 AM, and students are expected to be present in their classroom and ready to learn at that time. If a student arrives after 8:00 AM, a parent or guardian must sign them in at the front office.

Repeated tardiness that disrupts learning may result in a meeting with the administration to develop a plan for improvement.

### ***Truancy and Habitual Absenteeism***

According to New Hampshire law, truancy is defined as ten half-days (or five full days) of unexcused absences during the school year.

If a student reaches this threshold, the school is required to notify the appropriate truancy officer.

If absences continue, the school will work with the family to address the issue. The school will:

- Notify parents or guardians of the attendance concern.
- Request a meeting to develop an attendance plan.

- Take additional steps as required by state law to support the student's well-being and academic progress.

## **Health, Illness, and Medication Policy**

### ***Illness and Attendance***

If your child is ill, please keep them home until recovered. Vomiting, severe diarrhea, or fever are clear signs of illness. Students experiencing more than one episode of vomiting or diarrhea or a temperature above 100 degrees over the previous 24 hours should remain out of school until symptoms subside, and the student feels well enough to participate in school. If your child becomes ill or is injured at school, you will be notified.

### ***Head Lice***

Students with head lice must remain home until treated and free of live lice and nits.

### ***Immunizations***

All students must meet NH State immunization requirements for school attendance. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring records are up to date with the school office.

### ***Medication Rules***

A student may not carry or use any medication – prescription or over the counter – in school or on school grounds. If a child is on medication which must be administered at school, forms requesting this service may be obtained from the school office. Parent permission is required before ANY medication, including non-prescription medication, may be given. All medication must be provided by the parent/guardian and must be delivered directly to the school nurse or front office and in its original pharmacy container. See Cornerstone's OPS-08 Medication Handling Policy.

## **Section 7: Student Conduct and School Culture**

### **Discipline and Behavior**

Cornerstone's philosophy of student governance and discipline is rooted in the belief that a positive, inclusive, and supportive school environment is fundamental to student success. The approach emphasizes respect, kindness, and accountability by fostering strong relationships, encouraging open communication, and collaboratively addressing and repairing harm.

This is achieved by integrating evidence-based behavior management strategies to support Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). This approach promotes the development of the whole child, academically, socially, and emotionally, while ensuring that all students feel safe, respected, and empowered to take responsibility for their actions and learning. Core principles include 1) proactive and preventative strategies to set students up for success; 2) social-emotional learning as a foundation; 3) restorative practices and logical consequences; 4) student empowerment and leadership; and 5) equity and inclusivity.

### ***Promoting Positive Behavior***

We promote positive behavior through:

- Clear expectations and visual reminders throughout the school
- Positive reinforcement, such as praise, "star charts," and group goals
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) best practices, which include lessons, role-play, and tools such as a "calm corner" for reflection
- Consistent, age-appropriate consequences and restorative conversations to repair harm

When a student needs additional help meeting expectations, teachers and staff collaborate with families to create individualized behavior supports such as mentorship, progress monitoring, or behavior contracts.

## ***Behavior Levels***

- Minor - a low-level rule violation
  - Does not pose a safety risk
  - Does not significantly disrupt learning beyond the immediate moment
  - Can be effectively addressed by the classroom teacher
  - Does not require removal from instruction
- Major - a serious rule violation
  - Poses a safety risk to self or others **or**
  - Causes substantial disruption to the learning environment **or**
  - Is illegal **or**
  - Requires administrative involvement and/or removal from class

## ***Behavioral Support Framework***

Cornerstone uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to guide behavioral interventions:

- Tier I (Universal) provides universal school-wide strategies to create a positive environment
- Tier II (Targeted) offers additional support through social skills groups or targeted behavioral intervention
- Tier III (Intensive) is reserved for students requiring individualized, intensive support due to persistent behavioral issues. Interventions may include an individualized behavioral plan or one-on-one support.

Data such as office referrals, attendance, and academic progress are used to identify students who may need additional support and to monitor the effectiveness of interventions.

## **Due Process in Disciplinary Matters**

Cornerstone ensures that all disciplinary actions are fair, transparent, and developmentally appropriate. Our due process procedures are consistent with RSA 193:13 and other applicable state laws.

Please refer to [STU-02 Student Discipline and Due Process Policy and Procedures](#).

## **Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying**

All incidents of bullying or cyberbullying will be addressed in accordance with RSA 193-F, New Hampshire's Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Act.

Cornerstone School prohibits bullying and cyberbullying against all students. Bullying includes actions motivated by a student's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, disability, socioeconomic status, or other distinguishing characteristics, as well as actions based on association with someone with these characteristics.

Cyberbullying involves bullying through electronic means, including phones, computers, email, messaging, or websites.

Our policy is to protect students from physical, emotional, and psychological harm caused by bullying or cyberbullying.

Bullying can be addressed whether it occurs on school property, at school-sponsored activities, or off-campus if it substantially affects a student's educational experience or the school's operations.

## **Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco**

The Cornerstone Board of Trustees has policies prohibiting the possession, sale, or use of tobacco products, alcohol, and illegal drugs by students, non-students, and adults in school buildings, on school property, and at school activities, regardless of location. If a student violates these rules, parents will be notified and appropriate consequences, which could include suspension and/or expulsion, will follow. The school may also notify the police. All families are encouraged to review OPS-04 Tobacco Products Ban: Use and Possession on School Facilities and Grounds

## **Dress Code**

At Cornerstone, we encourage students to wear clothing that is comfortable, safe, and appropriate for learning and play. Our dress code helps students focus on school activities while expressing themselves in a positive way.

## ***General Guidelines***

- Clothing should fit properly and allow students to move, sit, and play comfortably.
- Clothing should be worn in an appropriate manner such that undergarments are not visible.
- Shorts and skirts should be at least mid-thigh in length.
- Clothing with inappropriate language, graphics, or images is not allowed.
- Shoes must be safe and appropriate for active play. Closed-toe shoes are strongly recommended. Sneakers are required for PE class.
- Hats may not be worn in school unless authorized by the Executive or Assistant Director for special events or a specific reason.
- Hoodies and sweatshirts are allowed, but hoods should be down indoors.

## ***Winter Clothing Guidelines***

- Outside recess will be held if the temperature with wind chill is at or above 10 degrees F. In cold weather, students must wear a heavy jacket, hat, gloves/mittens, snowpants, and boots.

Note: The school administration reserves the right to determine whether clothing is appropriate for school. Parents will be contacted if a student's attire is not suitable, and students may be asked to change.

## **Items from Home**

To help maintain a focused and safe learning environment, students should leave personal items such as toys, games, costumes, and other non-school materials at home, unless the classroom teacher has approved them for a special activity or sharing opportunity. Personal items can easily become distracting or cause conflicts among students.

- Fidgets: Fidgets may only be used if included in an approved student plan (e.g., Individualized Learning Plan or Behavior Support Plan). The school will provide these to ensure consistency and minimize distractions. Personal fidgets brought from home are not allowed.

- Costumes/Dress-Up Clothing: Costumes or dress-up clothing from home are not permitted during the school day. Families will receive advance notice and guidelines if a classroom or school-wide event allows themed or dress-up clothing.

## **Section 8: Academic Program**

Cornerstone Charter School provides a content-rich, knowledge-building curriculum grounded in the Science of Reading and evidence-based instructional practices. Our literacy program is built upon the Orton-Gillingham approach, ensuring systematic, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Foundational math and literacy skills are taught through structured, sequential, multisensory lessons designed to meet the needs of all learners, including students who require more intensive support. Cornerstone's academic program meets or exceeds the New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards.

Across all subjects, students build strong background knowledge in history, science, literature, civics, mathematics, and the arts through integrated units of study. Instruction combines explicit teaching with Collaborative Project-Based Learning, allowing students to apply knowledge through meaningful, interdisciplinary projects that require inquiry, problem-solving, discussion, and written expression. Through this balanced approach, students develop deep understanding, critical thinking skills, and the habits necessary to become strong readers, thinkers, and leaders.

Cornerstone provides a well-rounded education that includes:

- Music
- Visual Arts
- Physical Education and Health

These subjects support creativity, wellness, and personal growth and align with the National Core Arts Standards and New Hampshire Physical Education Guidelines.

## **Assessments and Student Progress**

At Cornerstone, student progress is measured through a balanced system of classroom assessments, standardized assessments, and ongoing teacher observation. Grades and progress reports reflect each student's mastery of grade-level standards, growth over time, and development of strong work habits. Because literacy is foundational to learning across all subjects, particular attention is given to reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Cornerstone uses a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure that every student receives the appropriate level of academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support. This framework includes regular screening, progress monitoring, targeted instruction or intervention as needed, and data-based decision making to guide teaching and learning.

Report cards are issued at the end of each trimester. Parent-Teacher Conferences are held at least twice annually to review student growth, discuss performance, and set goals in partnership with families. Cornerstone participates in all assessments required by the State of New Hampshire and administers additional benchmark to monitor growth and ensure students are meeting or exceeding New Hampshire College and Career Ready Standards. Assessment data is reviewed regularly to celebrate growth, identify areas for improvement, and refine instruction to support student success.

## **School Supplies**

Cornerstone Charter School will publish a supply list for families to purchase before the start of school. Providing these supplies helps ensure that students are prepared each day and allows the school to direct resources toward instructional programming.

Families who are able and would like to contribute additional supplies to support the classroom community are welcome to do so. Teachers may share optional classroom wish lists of items that enhance learning for all students. Contributions beyond the required list are entirely voluntary. If a family needs assistance obtaining required supplies, we encourage them to contact the school office

confidentially so that we can partner to ensure every student is fully prepared to learn.

## **Field Trips**

Field trips connect students with the community and provide hands-on experiences that deepen and enrich classroom learning. These trips give students opportunities to explore meaningful contexts, build relationships, and engage in authentic, real-world learning.

Field trips take place during regular school hours and may require families to volunteer as drivers or chaperones.

### ***Permission Requirements***

#### **Walking Field Trips (Blanket Permission Slip):**

Cornerstone maintains a blanket permission slip for field trips within walking distance of the school (for example: walking path or nearby hiking trails). Families will receive at least 24 hours' notice before each trip. If you prefer your child not participate in a specific outing, please notify the teacher at that time.

#### **Trips Requiring Transportation**

For field trips requiring transportation by bus or car, a separate permission slip will be sent home and must be signed and returned at least 24 hours prior to departure.

## **Student Support & Special Education**

### ***Special Education***

If a student has, or is determined to need, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the resident school district (where the student lives) is responsible for providing those services. Cornerstone works cooperatively with resident districts to ensure every child receives a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Key provisions under RSA 194-B outline that:

- The resident district retains responsibility for funding and educational decision-making for children with disabilities attending chartered public schools.
- Services may be provided using one or more of the following methods, beginning with the least restrictive environment:
  1. Resident district staff may provide services at Cornerstone.
  2. The district may contract with a service provider to deliver services at Cornerstone.
  3. The district may provide services at a district school or provider's location.
  4. The district may contract directly with a chartered public school for services.
- The resident district must also provide transportation if it is required for a student to access special education or related services.

### ***504 Plans***

The "504" in "504 Plan" refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, which specifies that no one with a disability can be excluded from participating in federally funded programs or activities, including elementary, secondary or postsecondary schooling. "Disability" in this context refers to a "physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities." This can include physical impairments; illnesses or injuries; communicable diseases; chronic conditions like asthma, allergies and diabetes; and learning problems.

A 504 Plan provides accommodations to ensure a student has access to learning. A 504 Plan will be developed, as needed, to create specific reasonable accommodations to assist the student in the classroom.

### ***Title I, Part A – Parents' Right to Know***

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), parents have the right to request information about the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teachers. Upon request, Cornerstone will provide:

- Whether the teacher meets state certification for their assignment;
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status;
- Whether the teacher is teaching within their certified field; and
- Whether your child receives services from paraprofessionals, and if so, their qualifications.

### ***Dyslexia Screening***

In compliance with RSA 200:59 (HB 377), all New Hampshire public and charter schools must screen K-3 students for early indicators of dyslexia and related reading disorders.

Key requirements include:

- Screening is conducted using an evidence-based tool.
- Screenings occur at least twice per year through third grade.
- Families will be informed of all screening results.
- If results show a student is at risk, the school must complete a secondary assessment within 30 days to determine the need for reading interventions or a special education evaluation.

## **Section 9: Communication and Family Involvement**

Cornerstone prioritizes frequent, honest, and transparent communication. We will communicate on a regular basis with families and school stakeholders about ongoing school business, events, student performance, and any other necessary topics through, but not limited to, the following practices:

- Regularly published newsletters
- School website
- Student information system - Alma
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Emails
- Scheduled meetings

## **Contacting Cornerstone**

The Cornerstone office is open Monday–Friday from 7:30 AM to 3:45 PM. If you have an urgent concern or need to update your child’s pick-up arrangements, please call the office at 603-678-4778 to ensure the information is received promptly.

- If your call is not answered, please leave a message, and a staff member will return your call as soon as possible.
- You may also email [office@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:office@cornerstone-cs.org) to report student absences, and please CC your child’s teacher as well.

## **Contacting Teachers**

Cornerstone classrooms are child-centered environments, so teachers are fully engaged with students during the school day and are not available for in-person/phone conversations or immediate email responses.

- Teachers typically respond to emails within 24 hours, during their scheduled planning times or before or after school.
- To meet with a teacher, please schedule an appointment via email or by contacting the office.
- For safety and supervision, please avoid extended conversations with teachers during drop-off or pick-up times.

## **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

- Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in the fall and winter. These meetings are an important opportunity to discuss your child’s progress, celebrate achievements, and collaborate with teachers. Teachers will reach out at least one week in advance to schedule a time.
- Please plan to attend conferences on the scheduled dates whenever possible. Rescheduling can be difficult, so check the school calendar in advance.
- We will schedule events throughout the school year to give parents a chance to visit classrooms and learn more about our programming.

## **Family Involvement & Volunteerism**

Families are encouraged to participate in school life in many ways, including:

- Attending school events
- Volunteering for building or classroom projects
- Chaperoning field trips
- Sharing cultural traditions, expertise, or passions with students
- Service on Board of Trustees
- Service on school committees

Opportunities are shared in the newsletter.

### ***Background Checks***

For the safety of our students, all volunteers who work directly with children must complete an annual criminal background check.

- Background checks can take 2-3 weeks to process once completed, so please plan ahead if you may wish to volunteer or chaperone during the school year.
- Information on how to complete a background check is available in the school office.

### ***Chaperones and Drivers***

Chaperones for field trips are considered volunteers and, therefore, must have a current background check on file.

In addition:

- Chaperones who wish to drive students must provide:
  - Proof of a valid driver's license, and
  - Proof of automobile liability insurance with a minimum coverage of \$100,000/\$300,000.

These documents must be submitted to the school office before the trip.

## ***Social Media***

Cornerstone uses social media to:

- Share school news and updates
- Celebrate student achievements
- Highlight learning experiences
- Communicate upcoming events
- Facilitate marketing and outreach initiatives

### Guidelines:

- Social media is not for discussing individual students or resolving school issues.
- All school-related communication should occur through official channels: email, phone, or in-person meetings.
- Posts or comments on official Cornerstone accounts should be respectful and constructive. Inappropriate or disruptive content may be removed.

## **Photo Release**

From time to time, Cornerstone may take photographs, videos, or other media of students for use in school publications, newsletters, social media, websites, or other educational materials. These images may showcase student learning, school events, or classroom activities.

- **Parental Permission:** At the beginning of each school year, families will be asked to provide consent for their child's participation in photographs or media.
- **Use of Images:** Only students whose parents/guardians have granted permission will be featured in public-facing materials.
- **Privacy:** Student names may or may not accompany images, depending on the purpose and location of the publication. Photos or videos will not be shared outside of Cornerstone without specific parental permission.
- **Opt-Out:** Parents/guardians may withdraw permission at any time by notifying the school office in writing.

## **Recording and Use of Audio/Video**

In accordance with New Hampshire state law, Cornerstone Charter School will not make audio or video recordings of students unless written consent is provided by the parent or legal guardian. This includes recordings in classrooms, instructional settings, and other school-sponsored activities. Parents may grant or withhold consent annually during the enrollment process.

Exceptions are permitted for a recording that is:

- part of a court proceeding or child protective services investigation;
- part of a safety demonstration; or
- intended to maintain order and discipline in a common area or on student transportation vehicles.

## **Section 10: Equal Opportunity Statement**

Cornerstone Chartered Public School is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment where every student can learn and thrive. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in any of our programs, activities, admissions, or services.

- Every student has the right to equal access to all programs and services.
- Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Students and families with concerns are encouraged to bring them forward without fear of retaliation.

## **Reporting Concerns**

If you believe you or your child has experienced discrimination or harassment at Cornerstone, you may report your concern in writing to our Title IX/Non-Discrimination Compliance Coordinator:

### **Title IX/Non-Discrimination Coordinator**

Lindsay Wadleigh, Assistant Director  
Email: [lindsayw@cornerstone-cs.org](mailto:lindsayw@cornerstone-cs.org)

## External Resources

Families may also contact the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR).

U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Bldg  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Telephone: 800-421-3481  
FAX: 202-453-6012; TDD: 800-877-8339  
Email: OCR@ed.gov

*For full details, please see Cornerstone's Board-approved [Non-Discrimination Policy \(ETH-02\)](#) and [Non-Discrimination Grievance Procedure \(ETH-02a\)](#), available on the school website.*

## Section 11: Family Handbook Acknowledgment

Cornerstone Charter School

School Year: 2026–2027

I/We acknowledge that we have received access to the Cornerstone Charter School Family Handbook for the 2026–2027 school year.

I/We understand that it is our responsibility to read and become familiar with the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the Handbook. We understand that these guidelines are designed to support a safe, respectful, and academically focused learning environment.

I/We understand that:

- The Handbook contains important information regarding school policies, student expectations, attendance, discipline, and family responsibilities.
- We are responsible for reviewing this information with our child(ren)
- Questions regarding the Handbook may be directed to school administration.
- The Handbook may be updated during the school year to reflect changes in law, regulation, or school policy. Families will be notified of any substantive changes.

I/We understand that the Family Handbook is not a contract but serves as a guide to school policies and procedures.

By signing below, I/We acknowledge receipt and understanding of the Cornerstone Charter School Family Handbook, including the Parental Bill of Rights and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name (Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name (Print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A

### HB10 - NH Law - Parental Bill of Rights

All parental rights are reserved to the parents of a minor child in this state without obstruction or interference from any school. These rights include, but are not limited to, the right:

- (a) To direct the upbringing and the moral or religious training.
- (b) To direct the education, including the right to choose to enroll the minor child in an assigned resident public school, a public charter school, a non-public school, including a religious school, a home education program, or any other state-based education program, as authorized by law, as an alternative to public education, as set forth in RSA 193:1 and RSA 194-F:1, et seq.
- (c) To request that a minor child be enrolled in a public school other than the public school assigned to them by their residence to avoid a manifest educational hardship, as set forth in RSA 193:3.
- (d) To enroll his or her minor child in gifted or special education programs if the child qualifies for such programs.
- (e) To inquire of the school or school personnel and promptly receive accurate, truthful, and complete disclosure regarding any and all matters related to their minor child, unless an immediate answer cannot be provided when the initial request is made, in which case, the answer shall be provided no later than 10 business days after the request.
- (f) To be informed of the school's policy regarding discipline policies and procedures, as set forth in RSA 193:13.
- (g) To obtain access for a minor child to public curricular courses and co-curricular programs offered by the local school district where the student resides while choosing to enroll their child in a non-public, public chartered, home education, or any other state-based education program, as set forth in RSA 193:1-c and RSA 194-F:2, II(d).
- (h) To inspect any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum within a reasonable period following a request, as set forth in 20 U.S.C. section 1232h(c)(1)(C).
- (i) To opt out of health or sex education and any other objectionable material, as set forth in RSA 186:11, IX-b and IX-c.
- (j) To be advised of and have the right to opt the minor child out of any nonacademic survey or questionnaire.

- (k) To opt out of any district-level data collection relating to his or her minor child not required by federal or state law.
- (l) To exempt their public-school minor child from participating in required statewide assessments in English, language arts, mathematics, and/or science, as set forth in RSA 193-C:6.
- (m) To receive information regarding the level of achievement and academic growth of their minor child in the state academic assessments in English, language arts, mathematics, and/or science, as set forth in the Every Student Succeeds Act, 20 U.S.C. section 1112 (e)(1)(B)(i).
- (n) To receive a school report card and be informed of his or her minor child's attendance requirements and compliance with such requirements.
- (o) To access and review all education records relating to their minor child within 10 business days after the day the school receives a request for access, as set forth in RSA 189:66, IV and 34 C.F.R. 99.5.
- (p) To consent in writing before the state or any of its political subdivisions, including, without limitation, any school pursuant also to the provisions of RSA 189:68, III-V, makes a video or voice recording, unless such recording is made during or as part of a court proceeding or part of a forensic interview in a criminal or other investigation by the bureau of child protective services or it is to be used solely for the purpose of a safety demonstration, including the maintenance of order and discipline in the common areas of a school or on student transportation vehicles.
- (q) To be notified whenever seclusion or restraint has been used on their minor child as set forth in RSA 126-U:7.
- (r) To access and review all medical records of their minor child maintained by a school or school personnel, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
- (s) To exempt their minor child from immunizations if, in the opinion of a physician, the immunization is detrimental to the child's health or because of religious beliefs, as set forth in RSA 141-C:20-a and RSA 141-C:20-c.

## **Appendix B**

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Cornerstone Charter School complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records and provides parents and eligible students certain rights regarding those records.

#### **Parent and Student Rights**

FERPA provides parents/guardians and eligible students (students who are 18 years of age or attending a postsecondary institution) the following rights:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students should submit a written request to the school administration identifying the record(s) they wish to inspect. The school will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights.

Parents or eligible students who wish to request an amendment should submit a written request to the school that clearly identifies the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student will be notified of the decision and their right to a hearing regarding the request.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

FERPA permits disclosure without consent to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, teacher, or support staff member, or a person or company with whom the school has contracted to perform a special task (such as attorneys, auditors, consultants, or

service providers). A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with FERPA requirements.

Complaints may be submitted to:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

### **Directory Information**

FERPA allows schools to designate certain information as “directory information,” which may be released without prior written consent unless the parent or eligible student opts out.

Cornerstone Charter School may designate the following as directory information:

- Student name
- Address
- Phone number
- Date and place of birth
- Dates of attendance
- Participation in officially recognized activities or programs

Parents or eligible students who do not want directory information disclosed must notify the school in writing within 30 days of enrollment or the start of the school year.

### **Protection of Student Information**

Cornerstone Charter School takes reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality and security of student records. Access to student records is limited to individuals who have a legitimate educational interest or who are otherwise authorized under FERPA or applicable law.